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ABSTRACT

An analysis of the Graduate Educational Research Fellowship Training Program at Case Western Reserve University is presented. The key elements of the program involve: financial support of graduate sutdents from a number of social and behavioral science disciplines related to educational problems; commitment on the part of several departments in the social and behavioral sciences that they had a stake as well as a responsibility to be directly involved in the training of students who would eventually claim a professional interest in education; a detailed curriculum format that balanced a structured set of courses along with built-in opportunities for independent learning; and program coursework that clearly reflected the multidisciplinary character of the objectives of the program as well as the operational steps necessary to achieve these expressed goals. Changes to the program and strengths and difficulties of the program are discussed. (SPG)

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FINAL PROGRESS REPORT

Multi-Disciplinary Ph.D. Research Training

Case Western Reserve University

Cleveland, Ohio

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TRAINING PROGRAM--FINAL REPORT

1. a. Objectives: The Graduate Educational Research Fellowship Training Program began here at CWRU in September, 1966, with high hopes and a plan which we thought would guarantee their realization. The key elements of that plan involved (1) financial support of graduate students from a number of social and behavioral science disciplines with interests in various problems having to do with the educational enterprise of our society; (2) commitment on the part of several departments in the social and behavioral sciences that they had a stake as well as a responsibility to be directly involved in the training of students who would eventually claim a professional interest in matters educational; (3) a detailed curriculum format which balanced a structured set of courses along with built-in opportunities for independent learning; and (4) program of coursework which clearly reflected the multi-disciplinary character of the objectives of the program as well as the operational steps necessary to achieve these expressed goals.

As we reported previously, although the objectives of the program remained clear and were consistent from year to year, there was some modification in the formally structured core curriculum as originally proposed. Although the core courses remained in tact (in the sense that they were scheduled by the participating departments), the actual pattern in terms of a specified sequence of work was significantly altered by permitting students greater freedom of choice than was the case during the first two years of the program. The change was due primarily to two factors: First, the small number of new trainees who entered the program at any one moment in time after the first year made it more feasible than was previously possible to accommodate to individual talents and interests.

Second, the fact that the majority of trainees initially involved had completed formal course requirements and were almost totally immersed in individually oriented pursuits (preparing for Ph.D. General Examinations, formulating dissertation proposals, or actually engaged in the collection and analysis of data in connection with their dissertations), engendered a shift in the character of the program as originally conceived--viz., a shift away from the more formalized requirements exemplified by courses toward the more hand-tailored tutorial arrangements between students and faculty.

That shift had a definite halo effect in that it tended to reinforce the freedom of choice permitted in-coming students. In practical terms, new students could either opt for the sequence as originally planned, or take courses in their home departments which were viewed as critically relevant to their training -- e.g., educational sociology, courses in statistics, or advanced problems in research methodology. The important point to be noted is that the essential character of the program after the first two years was greatly influenced by the progress made by advanced students toward completing their dissertations and also served to prompt the more recent trainees to consider perhaps earlier than previously, intensive research training necessarily related to their dissertation efforts.

Given the fact that our basic objective was to train scholars and researchers who would choose the realm of education as the broad context in which to apply their special skills as social and behavioral scientists, the brief historical account regarding shifting procedural orientations is clearly not as negative as it might at first appear.

In fact, the reverse is perhaps more valid as an outcome -- in other words, an examination of the dissertation topics and foci of those students who have been supported by funds from the training grant readily reveals that the central objective has been to a large extent achieved. Indeed, a comparison between the end products (i.e., dissertation subject matter) of the training program at issue here and others supported by different government agencies clearly indicates that this program has come closer to target than other funded programs. An interesting point to be noted is that while we could expect graduate students from the department of education to become intensively involved in matters relevant to education, the success of this program is more reliably measured by the fact that the majority of trainees from sociology, and operations research choose pertinent educational problems for the purposes of satisfying dissertation requirements.

Despite the judgment that from the perspective of a topic-count the program has had a high degree of success, there remains great room for improvement. Specifically, the individualistic orientation, while offering the student great latitude and freedom of choice relevant to his or her special interests, does have its drawbacks. For example, the relative neglect of a formal or standardized course structure virtually precludes any effort to utilize the collective skills, talents and concerns of the trainees for the purposes of intensive and systematic investigation of specific problem areas. This is not to say that students cannot go their own way in accord with unique ideas or motivations--I mean to suggest that a better arrangement between individual interests and the advantage to be gained by pooling an array of perspectives regarding a given empirical focus be granted as a substantive goal.

In other words, I would consider as one important criterion of success the extent to which specific problems are viewed critically from the several perspectives represented by the trainees. By the same token, the absence of academic pathways (courses, seminars) wherein students meet in collective fashion decreases significantly the opportunity to gain insights into the thinking modalities of disciplines other than their own.

b. Given the highly individual character of the program major foci for the purposes of study were largely determined in terms of student interests. These are reflected in the dissertation topics listed in addendum No. 1. As suggested above, the topics selected for intensive research reflect the multifaceted framework to which students were exposed. Thus, the requirements imposed by the nature of the research methodology deemed appropriate by a given student's dissertation committee played the important role in determining the extent of field work, laboratory techniques, etc., regarded as basic for data collection purposes. Similarly, the amount and kind of research experiences for these trainees varied with home department rules and regulations governing graduate training.

c. & d. Except for the declaration of their interest in matters relevant to the educational enterprise, trainees involved in this program were exposed essentially to the same dimensions and ingredients of departmental structure and training philosophies as were students committed (and/or supported) to other specialty interests.

e. Despite the uncertainty of funding from one year to the next, despite the obvious difficulties encountered in mounting the elegantly conceived course curriculum the students supported by this program show a significantly higher completion rate than those supported by programs stemming from other segments of HEW.

The reasons as to why this pattern exists are at this point quite vague--that is, on the face of it, students in this program do not differ, except for declared focus of interest, from other students in their repective departments. However, I would offer one possible explanatory note--namely, that the very flexibility resulting from the rather ad hoc funding situation characteristic of this program enabled the participating departments to support students who had already demonstrated commitment and competence to pursue and complete doctoral requirements. That is, the very difficulty experienced in mounting the formal program anew each year for and entire entering cohort of students, produced an alternate policy which permitted support for students in varying stages of their graduate career. Hence, the departments were accorded the opportunity to select "deserving" students rather than continuously counting on criteria by which new students are admitted.

2. The major strengths of the program have already been noted--namely, the successful completion rate achieved by students in this program compared to others. There were no unique features which might characterize this program differently from other funded training efforts.

3. As I see it the major difficulty in mounting and sustaining the program as originally conceived is the same for those attempting to provide for inter-disciplinary involvement in any subject matter area, be it health, welfare or education. The essential point has to do with developing workable structural arrangements which become viable units in the academic setting. While such arrangements are conceptually sound and presumably achieved with relative ease, the fact of the matter is that they are extremely difficult to construct let alone maintain. In short, initial commitment on the part of representatives from several disciplines does not guarantee that

realization will automatically follow. Among the critical ingredients which must be recognized as necessary baseline from which to generate inter-disciplinary programs is support for such efforts at home. That is, unless there is substantial support (philosophic and financial) for programs that cut across traditional boundaries, funds from outside are not likely to meaningfully engender such objectives.

4. Have already addressed this issue.

5. At the moment there is very little effort -- at least in terms of the aims as originally conceived -- to continue the program. This does not preclude graduate training in the general area of education nor restrict students from intensive doctoral work in that rather large domain of concern. It does mean, however, that the means by which a relatively large number of students can be channeled toward educational matters as subjects for scholarly research, are limited.

A final note: Our experience has been a mixed one, combining the success of some students on the one hand with those that were not as productive as we would have wished on the other. However, it seems to me that the former evaluation weighs more heavily than the latter. It is clear from the accompanying report regarding student achievements that this program has succeeded whereas others have indeed failed. In a word then, it seems clear that our success speaks more loudly on the side of those who would provide financial support for individual students rather than for the more formalized training program designed in accord with structural and hence, more abstract academic criteria.

TRAINEE DATA

NAME	PERIOD OF SUPPORT FROM	TO	FIELD OF STUDY	DEGREE AND YEAR ACQUIRED OR EXPECTED	CURRENT EMPLOYMENT
1. Ram Avtar	9-1-70	6-30-72	Operations Research	M.S. 1-72	
2. Warren Balinsky	9-1-66	1-31-70	Operations Research	Ph.D. 8-70	Asst. Prof., Sch. of Management U. of New York - Buffalo
3. Ronald Besel	9-1-66	1-31-70	Education	Ph.D. 1-71	Southwest Regional Lab.
4. Alan Brotman	9-1-66	12-31-69	Education		
5. Jerry Clavner	9-1-68	8-31-71	Education	Ph.D. 9-71	Asst. Prof. of Anthro., Cuyahoga Community College, Cleve., Ohio
6. Robert Dirks	9-1-68	8-31-68	Anthropology	Ph.D. 1-72	Asst. Prof., Illinois Normal Univ.
7. Dennis Gallagher	9-1-68	8-31-69	Organizational Behav.	Ph.D. 1969	Private Consultant, Colorado
8. Joseph Grysiewicz	9-1-69	8-31-70	Operations Research		
9. George Hinkle	9-1-69	8-31-72	Operations Research	Ph.D. expected 9-75	Working for NAD, Crane, Indiana
10. Irene Kolanko	9-1-70	5-31-70	Operations Research	M.S. 1-71	
11. Paul D. Kucik	9-1-70	6-31-71	Operations Research	M.S. 1-72	
12. Alfred Michenzi	9-1-68	8-31-70	Operations Research	Ph.D. expected 1-74	Consultant Ernst & Ernst Consulting Firm, Management Scientists
13. Fred Millar	6-15-68	8-31-72	Sociology	Ph.D. expected 6-74	Teaching - George Mason University Fairfax, Virginia
14. Harvey Moore	9-1-69	12-31-70	Sociology	Ph.D. 8-72	Military Service-Army, Signal Corp.
15. Neil Phinney	9-1-66	8-30-69	Education	Ph.D. 6-70	Teaching, Long Island University
16. James J. Rago	9-1-67	8-30-68	Organizational Behav.	Ph.D. 1969	Asst. Prof., Cleveland State Univ.
17. Prudence Randall	9-1-66 9-1-70	6-30-69 5-31-71	Education	Ph.D. 6-71	Content Editor, Encyclopedia of Education - McMillan Co., N.Y.
18. Douglas Rowland	9-1-66	8-31-67	Operations Research Mathematics	M.S. 1967 Ph.D. 6-72	
19. Roy Ruckdeschel	6-15-70	6-30-73	Sociology	Ph.D. expected 6-74	Student, Case Western Reserve Univ.
20. Stuart Schoenfeld	9-1-66	8-31-70	Sociology	Ph.D. 9-71	Asst. Prof., Glendon College York Univ. Toronto, Canada
21. William Stratton	9-1-69	8-31-73	Organizational Behav.	Ph.D. expected 6-74	
22. Lorraine Zimmerman	9-1-66	6-15-67	Anthropology	Expected from Wayne State University	Instructor, Wayne State University

NAME	DISSERTATION TITLE
1. Warren Balinsky	"Some Manpower Planning Models Based on Educational Attainment"
2. Ronald Besel	"The Construct Validation of an Opinion Survey Instrument"
3. Jerry Clavner	"Articulation of Educational Experiences: The Mobile Student"
4. Robert Dirks	"Local Level Politics in Tortola, British Virgin Islands"
5. Dennis Gallagher	"Environmental Contributors to Personal and Conceptual Learning"
6. George Hinkle	No dissertation title yet
7. Alfred Michenzi	"Analysis of Feedback Models of Higher Education Degree Production"
8. Edmund Millar	Prospective title: "Stratification and Deferentiation in Higher Education: The Politics of Community Colleges in Ohio"
9. Harvey Moore	"Client Interests and Organizational Goals"
10. Neil Phinney	"The Use of Meta-Ethnical Criteria in the Criticism of Normative Educational Theory with an Application to Brameld's Reconstructionism"
11. James J. Rago	"The Influence of Undergraduate Residence upon Student Personal Development"
12. Prudence Randall	"The Meaning of Progressivism in Urban School Reform: Cleveland, 1901-1909"
13. Douglas Rowland	"Crossings of Curves by One-Diminsional Brownian"
14. Roy Ruckdeschel	Prospective title: "Teachers and Their Unions: A Rank and File Perspective"
15. Stuart Schoenfeld	"University Organization, Professionalism and University Change"
16. William Stratton	No title yet

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